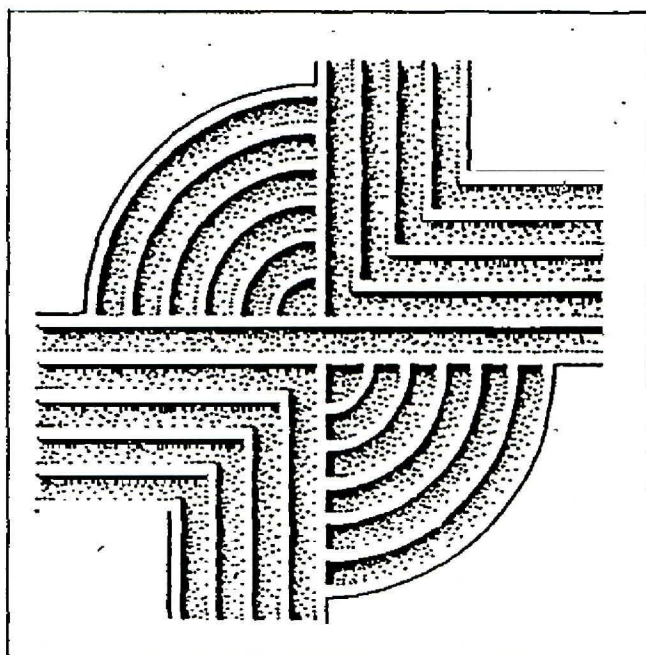


# **PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY AT THE STONEY/BAYNARD PLANTATION SITE, HILTON HEAD ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA**



## **RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION 103**

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HILTON HEAD ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA**

Michael Trinkley

Chicora Research Contribution 103

Chicora Foundation, Inc.  
PO Box 8664 □ 861 Arbutus Drive  
Columbia, South Carolina 29202  
803/787-6910

April 3, 1993

American archaeologists have a rather unspectacular history of working with volunteers, especially when compared to our colleagues in England where much of their heritage is protected by highly motivated members of the public. While the reasons for this difference are undoubtedly numerous, one significant aspect may be how archaeology is conducted in the two countries. This of course is related to a wide range of other issues, including the value English and American societies place on their heritage.

Here in the United States, and especially in South Carolina, the vast majority of archaeology is conducted under the auspices of the compliance system. That is, archaeology is most often conducted in response to the need for a federal or state permit, or because of federal funding. This type of archaeology places certain limitations on the character of the work. Specifically, the requirements of strict scheduling, low bid funding, and controlled legal liability often dominate, and frequently limit, public involvement.

This is ironic since compliance archaeology has been mandated by various federal and state laws as "being in the public interest." Yet the public has little involvement in the act of "public oriented" compliance archaeology and I would argue receives precious little benefit for the public and private dollars involved.

Is there a solution? Is there a way to involve the public in archaeology, especially so-called "public archaeology"? And if so, what can be done to encourage this involvement? This, and the following two papers, will explore these and other issues. Natalie Adams will examine how the public was involved in a traditional compliance project, undertaken for the Greenville County Redevelopment Authority on a HUD funded project. Debi Hacker will explore how school kids were involved in another compliance project for the international pharmaceutical company, Roche Carolina, Inc.

These papers demonstrate not only that public involvement can be achieved in traditional "compliance" projects, but also why this involvement is so important -- both to the public and, frankly, to the health of our discipline. For when the public loses touch with our past and archaeology becomes little more than a dilettante hobby, we place our heritage at risk. In an era of shrinking budgets and increasing public scrutiny archaeology must demonstrate that it serves the public's needs.

Prior to these papers, however, I want to briefly discuss another Chicora project which is outside the traditional compliance framework. For the third season we have worked with the Friends of Stoney/Baynard Plantation and the Hilton Head Museum to explore the secrets of a late eighteenth-early nineteenth century plantation.



This project is unique since it is totally funded by local residents and supports. Under these circumstances it is possible to slowly pursue broad research questions, revising or expanding those questions from one season to the next based on current findings -- a luxury rarely present on compliance projects. Research to this point has included examination of historical documents, artifact density studies, testing of different site areas, examination of site features including architectural details, and the investigation of slave quarters associated with the main house.

Unlike compliance projects, the research at Stoney/Baynard directly depends on the public's interest -- interest in funding the research and, just as importantly, interest in participating. During the most recent investigations, conducted in late 1992, 200 square feet were opened in the main house and 800 square feet at the slave quarter. In addition, the supposed "well" was also investigated -- and found to be a tree throw. This work incorporated approximately 448 person hours -- 320 or **71% of which were contributed by volunteers** with no "formal" training in archaeology.

The quality of these investigations, however, equals that of any "professional" investigation, not simply because of careful supervision and instruction, but also because these people were helping to preserve **their heritage** -- they had a personal reason for taking great care of the site and its archaeological remains. In addition to the field investigations, local volunteers, who required relatively little supervision, were responsible for the preliminary processing of the collections on Hilton Head at the Museum. All of the volunteers were organized by Mrs. George Plante, who also participated at the site every day. We found that a key to volunteer success was having a local individual organize the efforts and Mrs. Plante did an exemplary job.

We found that there is no secret in forming an active volunteer program -- just hard work. One key to success, of course, is a local individual who will assume the responsibility necessary to make the program work -- and Mrs. Plante is certainly that kind of person. As a local it is easier to network and find dedicated volunteers through a wide-range of sources, sources on Hilton Head that would not be open to us in Columbia.

Chicora Foundation recognizes that volunteers are devoting their time and often their financial resources to our projects, rather than to some other project. We respond to that decision with appreciation. We work hard to ensure that the activity is a pleasurable one for the volunteer. This doesn't mean that volunteers work less hard than paid crew -- but it does mean that we try to ensure all volunteers have the opportunity to perform a wide variety of activities and that those activities are explained so their importance is clear. Chicora treats volunteers with the same respect and consideration that is due to any donor, since the donation of one's time, labor, and intellect is as valuable, or more so, than any monetary contribution.

Chicora developed volunteer handouts, explaining our commitment to volunteers,

medical and insurance considerations (since volunteers are not covered by Workers Compensation), tax information to help volunteers understand the tax laws regulating their contribution, and safe work practices. We also developed a special handout for Stoney/Baynard, explaining what we hoped the archaeological research would accomplish. We found that this not only helped volunteers to feel a part of the research process, but was also of interest to the over 350 visitors who came out to the site. This simple, clear handout cut through the mystery, the jargon, and the intimidation of archaeology to help the public understand why we were at the site and what we were doing.

The excavations at Stoney/Baynard also served as the back drop for the very successful organizational meeting of the Hilton Head Chapter of the Archaeological Society of South Carolina. The investigations at the site were used as an example of the professionalism required, even of avocational archaeologists.

But the public involvement at Stoney/Baynard did not end with these volunteer efforts. The research was the focus of very favorable news coverage by the *Island Packet* and *Hilton Head News*. It was also used by local teachers to help their students better understand both what archaeologists do, and how this can change our understanding of the past.

The Stoney/Baynard project not only accomplished the research goals, but just as importantly directly reached 400 adults and 100 students. In addition, we reached 13,000 individuals through newspaper coverage and 6,000 households through the television coverage. The following papers by Ms. Adams and Ms. Hacker will explain how similar programs in Greenville and Florence have affected the public.